1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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the worse for their experience. Indeed, it may well be, as Nuer assert, that they are the better for it, for they lead a sluggish life. The blood is boiled by women till it is fairly consistent and can be used as a meat flavouring with porridge; or the men let it stand till it coagulates into a solid block, and, after roasting it in the embers of a fire, cut it up and eat it.

Nuer do not regard the blood of cows as a staple article of diet and it does not play an important part in their cuisine. Indeed, they say that they do not perform the operation to acquire food, though they confess that roasted blood is delicious, but for the benefit of the cows. Bleeding is designed to cure a cow of any unfitness by letting out the bad blood of the sickness. Also, Nuer say, it makes the cow fat, for next day it will be more lively and graze avidly. Bleeding, moreover, in their opinion, decreases the desire of a cow to be served. Nuer say that if a cow is served too frequently it may eventually become barren, whereas, if it is bled now and again, it will only require to be served once and will be in calf. Cattle are sometimes bled for medical reasons in the rainy season, when people may be so replete that the blood is given to the boys of the kraal and to the dogs. Sometimes they make incisions in the noses of calves and let the blood flow to the ground in order to make them fat. I have seen Nuer scarify their own legs and the small of their backs to induce fleetness and strength.

The following two points seem to us to be significant. (1) Whilst Nuer normally do not kill their stock for food, the end of every beast is, in fact, the pot, so that they obtain sufficient meat to satisfy their craving and have no pressing need to hunt wild animals, an activity in which they engage little. (2) Except when epidemics are rife the usual occasions of eating meat are ritual and it is the festal character of rites which gives them much of their significance in the life of the people.

V

Apart from milk, meat, and blood, cattle furnish Nuer with numerous household necessities, and when we consider how few are their possessions we can appreciate the importance of cattle as raw material. The bodies and bodily products of cattle have the following uses:

Their skins are used for beds, trays, for carrying fuel (Plate XVII), cord for tethering and other purposes, flails (Fig. 15), leather collars for oxen (Fig. 4), and for the tympana of drums. They are employed in the manufacture of pipes, spears, shields,

[p. 29 contains no textual material]

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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farther afield may be abandoned for the time being. Other people whose opportunities for fishing may not be so great as their neighbours' may utilize the less accessible pools unmolested, but should climatic conditions cause scarcity elsewhere their owners will demand the right to use them to the exclusion of other people.

Hunting rights are also defined by the limits of recognized tribal or segment territory, but since the Nuer are not very active hunters there is no clear definition, and quarrels rarely arise. There are rules governing the division of the flesh of wild animals killed in collective hunting, though they are rarely followed without argument. The division of meat in these circumstances often leads to violent quarrels but is not a subject which reaches the stage of litigation in the courts. Ivory, a very valuable commodity in Nuer eyes, not because of its market value but because it is the ambition of most Nuer to own an ivory bracelet, is subject to more definite rules. The right tusk must always go to the first spearer, the *ran me koic e-je*, the left tusk to the second spearer, the *ran me gam e-je*. Others who take part in the hunt, even if the wounds they have inflicted have been much more deadly than those of the first two spearers, get no more than their share of the meat. Those who get the tusks must divide them among their kinsmen according to principles similar to those which govern the distribution of bridewealth cattle. The central portion must be given to the *gwan buthni* of the lineage, this portion being sufficient to make one large bangle; of the remainder a portion must go *kwi gwan*, to the father's side, and a portion *kwi man* (or *nar*), to the mother's or maternal uncle's side. Dead elephants are sometimes found, the ivory going to the first and second finder in the same manner. The right to tusks and the way in which they are distributed are not matters which come before the courts, and there are strong ritual sanctions for observing the correct rules. There is a mystical link between man—that is, Nuer—and elephants, which means that killing them is not only a hazardous physical undertaking, but is also spiritually dangerous. It is something akin to homicide, and special ritual must be performed, including the letting of blood (*birr*) from the first spearer.[1] Nuer also believe that if they ignored the rules of distribution, the spirit (*cien*) of the dead elephant would haunt them and would bring them misfortunes.

Conclusion

Rights in land are therefore collective and follow the segmentary structure of Nuer society. They are recognized and nowadays will be enforced in the courts, and they embrace all types of land necessary to the subsistence economy of the Nuer, but they are not in constant

[1] As in homicide it is the first spearer who is held responsible for the animal's death.

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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Chapter Two

RESOURCES OF THE NUER

WILD ANIMALS AND CATTLE

WILD animals abound in Nuerland. Lions, leopards, giraffes, buffaloes, elephants, hippos, monkeys are found as well as other species, and also crocodiles, snakes, and scorpions. 136

Sometimes animals are killed with spears (Fig. 4), sometimes traps are made to catch them. Holes are dug into which they fall and are unable to get out. Men sometimes chase them and drive them toward the trap which they have made. Giraffes may be killed in this way as they cannot run fast, especially if the ground be muddy. Monkeys are safe in Nuerland as a Nuer will not willingly kill them. If a monkey is killed, it will surely rain hard, but if it is killed in the dry season, the weather will only become cloudy. 224 [825]

Probably the largest snake found here is the python. Many of the snakes are deadly poisonous. One is a spitting snake. Another is said to bite and also sting its victim with its tail at the same time, much as a scorpion stings. Another snake, the 'thatut', is said to leave a tooth in the person it bites. The Nuer believe that if a person is once bitten by a 'thatut' no other snake will deign to bite him. 136 [825]

The number of cattle owned by individuals varies in different parts of Nuerland. Those who live along the Nile have many cattle. Those in the Garjak country have more cattle than those near Nasser. In the regions where cattle are more plentiful the number of cattle asked as a marriage price is greater. 231

Cattle with the wide-spreading long horns are the most desirable. A Nuer is afraid that a cow without horns may 231 776

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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231 [776] turn into a 'Lat' (a combination of ogre and cannibal which figures largely in folk-lore tales. Nuer firmly believe in these Lats and fear them).

Nuer, be they men, women, or children love their cattle; they are the pride of the tribe. The people delight in being among them. When a boy has his tribal marks [551] cut, he assumes an ox name in addition to his own.

[825] The cattle are always supposed to see the new moon one night before the people see it.

If a cow is sick, she is well cared for. Everything possible is done for her so far as the Nuer's knowledge goes. A wasps' nest is soaked in water and the mixture forcibly administered to the cow as a preventive against a certain fever.

A bunch of a certain kind of leaves tied about a cow's neck is supposed to help her if all is not right with her when she has just calved.

Muzzles made out of thorns are fastened on the mouth of a calf when they wish to prevent it from sucking.

The Nuer also have sheep, and numerous dogs may be seen.

[262] During the fishing season when many go to the fishing camps, the Nuer depends upon fish and milk for his food. The cattle are always taken to the fishing camp—for grazing is usually good—hence the milk supply.

THE FISHING SEASON

226 221 When the dry season is on, the river falls fast and the Nuer is eager to fish. The rivers are full of fish, great big ones, including the Nile perch and several other large white fish which are specially desired for food. In December and January Nuer with their cattle move from the villages to the fishing camps. They build (Fig. 6) [342] bee-hive-shaped houses—even the walls are of grass.

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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Chapter Seven

SOME NOTES ON RELIGION, SUPERSTITIONS, AND MORAL LAW

NUER GODS

776 THE Nuer has long feared and worshipped he knows not what. There are various gods, Deng, Wiu, Cwol, and others. Some have power over rain, some over crops, disease, death, or lightning.

778 Some animals are considered sacred, but what is sacred
825 to one man is not necessarily held sacred by another. It may be the crocodile, or the land crocodile, or a certain kind of snake. Every Nuer is certain to have a sacred animal which he will neither kill nor eat.

782 Sheep and cattle are sacrificed on various grounds in order to appease one god or another.

[776] When a person is struck by lightning and killed he is
766 said to have been taken by the god of lightning—Cwol. His body is laid upon a rack that is made in his house or barn and then covered entirely—over, under, and on all sides—with wood, ash, and soil. The door of the house is closed and the house is left desolate except for its silent owner. A person who has been struck and killed by lightning is never buried in the ground as others are.

784 No one will touch a person who has been stunned by lightning until he regains consciousness, for fear the god in him may be transmitted by contact.

778 A Nuer always considers the relatives of one who has been killed by lightning as sacred.

[826] Any one who has some physical or mental deformity
[784] may be considered as having a god in him and be regarded as sacred and avoided for that reason.

781 The Nuer worship is a worship of fear. The missionary feels as if he were living in Old Testament times, and

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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538 The Nuer language has a wealth of animal and bird stories, tales of the origin of the tribe and folk-lore. Also games, songs, riddles, and superstitions. All of these are as yet practically untouched by the pen. A sort of cannibal-ogre combination, capable of changing into an animal, is usually a prominent character in their folk-lore.

192 The language contains no word for 'thank you' as far as I have delved into it, but one does not need to be in Nuerland long to discover that the Nuer has a word for 'I am mistaken', and is willing to use it.

TIME, SEASONS, MOON, AND STARS.

[805] 821 The Nuer gauges time by moons, the light or dark of the moon. He knows the stars, and has names for many of the constellations. He is a keen observer of them and makes his own observations concerning them. Orion's belt is called 'gat rum juk'. One star is supposed to be a man leading a horse, the second star is supposed to be the horse, while the third star is another man driving the horse as he follows him.

The evening star is called 'Lipai chiing', as it is considered to be like a girl in the village waiting for the moon to come up and when it does come up, she goes away with it. Hence the name, which means 'wait in the village for the moon'.

The Southern Cross, the Little Dipper and other constellations are also noted and named.

●825 805 The Nuer firmly believes, as already noted, that the cattle see the new moon the night before it is visible to the human eye. I have frequently asked them concerning this. The date upon which the cattle see the new moon always seems to be the date specified upon the calendar as the date when the new moon should be visible. Yet the Nuer has no calendar.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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tions are to be understood as modes of God and not as his essence, which is Spirit. 776 ×

God being above, everything above is associated with him. This is why the heavenly bodies and the movements and actions connected with them are associated with him. This is why also the spirits of the air are regarded as *gaat kwoth*, children of God, in a way other spirits are not, for they, unlike other spirits, dwell in the air and are also thought of as being in the clouds, which are nearest to the sky. This is why also the *colwic* spirits are so closely associated with God, for he touched them with his fire from heaven and took them to himself. Some birds also are spoken about by [825] ● Nuer as *gaat kwoth*, especially those which fly high and seem, to us as well as to Nuer, to belong to heaven rather than to earth and therefore to be children of light and symbols of the divine. The feeling that they are in a measure detached from the earth is enhanced in the case of migratory birds[1] by their disappearances and reappearances. I have heard the idea expressed that in their absence from Nuerland they have gone to visit God's country. This is probably no more than poetic fancy, but we can say that the disappearance of these birds strengthens the allegory of God's children which arises from their ability to do what man cannot do, fly towards heaven and God. Twins also, in a very special sense, [845] are *gaat kwoth*. They belong to the above, and Nuer say that they are birds. The Jikul clan and the Gaanwar clan, whose ancestors [773] fell from heaven, are also *ji kwoth*, God's people, for that reason and are thought to have special powers.

Thus anything associated with the sky has virtue which is lacking in earthly things. Nuer pathetically compare man to heavenly things. He is *ran piny*, an earthly person and, according to the general Nuer view, his ghost is also earth-bound. Between God and man, between heaven and earth, there is a great gulf, and we shall find that an appreciation of the symbolism of the polarity of heaven and earth helps us to understand Nuer religious thought and feeling and also sheds light on certain social features of their religion, for example the greater prestige of prophets than of priests.

[1] I am indebted to Miss Ray Huffman and Dr. Mary Smith for the information that, among others, these are the pied crow, the kite, the pelican, the maribou stork, the eagle, the crested crane, the Cape Paradise flycatcher, the wagtail, and the durra-birds.

people be at peace. They complete the rite by building a small mound of ashes as a shrine (*yik*) to the spirit. I have seen goats with what the Nuer call *ma nyal*, python-like, markings dedicated to the python-spirit in kraals. A Lou tribesman told me that when he was a boy a python entered his father's kraal and paid particular attention to a goat dedicated to its spirit, and his father gave it milk in a gourd and rubbed its scales with butter. All Nuer say that if any snake enters the homestead of a man who respects that species he will offer it milk and rub its scales with butter, but I have not seen this done. They say that a snake which has been treated with these courtesies may enter the byre and sleep there and, when it wakes, crawl among the cattle in the kraal, paying friendly attention to the cow or beast of the flock dedicated to its spirit. A man who respects pythons respects also bees, because Nuer consider their markings to be like those of the python, and will not kill them or eat their honey.

Another snake respected by a large number of small lineages of Dinka descent is *lualdit* or *rir*, which I believe to be the tree cobra. A Nuer of the Leek tribe told me how this totem had come into his family, and his story has some interest in that it illustrates the way in which a lineage may acquire a totem. His father was digging a hole in which to plant a support to a new cattle byre when he scooped up a cobra with the earth in his hands. In his fright he killed it with a digging-stick. Later he fell sick and the form of a cobra appeared to him in a dream and told him that it wanted a *duor*, a gift, so he sacrificed an ox to the cobra-spirit and dedicated a cow to it. His sons now respect the cobra, and their descendants may continue to do so. During my first expedition to Nuerland one of my Zande servants was chased into my tent by one of these cobras and I was forced to shoot it. Later in the day a man of the cattle camp where I was residing came to complain that I had killed his *kwoth*, totem, when I might easily have sent to ask him to remove it from my tent. He demanded compensation, which I made with a lump of tobacco. Some people say that if you can kill a cobra without it seeing you, you will find *wal*, medicine, inside it. If it sees you it will spit out the medicine before you can kill it. Those who respect the cobra respect also the little red soldier ants, here again apparently on account of a resemblance of colour.[1] When bitten by them they do not slap them on their

[1] Dr. Lienhardt tells me that a beast dedicated to the spirit of cobra should

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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×776 Can any conclusions be reached about the nature of the things which are objects of respect? The totemism of any people involves the selection of certain natural objects to the exclusion of others. Nuer totems are certainly an odd assortment: lion, waterbuck, monitor lizard, crocodile, various snakes, tortoise, ostrich, cattle egret, durra-birds, various trees, papyrus, gourd, various fish, bee, red ant, river and stream, cattle with certain markings, monorchids, hide, rafter, and rope; and, if we were to include totemistic objects, parts of beasts and some diseases. Taking them as a whole we may say that there is no marked utilitarian element in their selection. The animals and birds and fish and plants and artifacts which are of most use to Nuer are absent from the list of their totems. The facts of Nuer totemism do not, therefore, support the contention of those who see in totemism chiefly, or even merely, a ritualization of empirical interests.[1] Nor in general are Nuer totems such creatures as might be expected, on account of some striking peculiarities, to attract particular attention. On the contrary, those creatures which have excited the mythopoeic imagination of the Nuer and which figure most prominently in their folk-tales do not figure, or figure rarely and insignificantly, among their totems.

×776 ●825 It is too broad a question to ask why animals, birds, reptiles, and trees should have become symbols for Nuer of the relation of Spirit to lineages. Any answer would have to be in very general terms because they have been common religious symbols among many different people at many different times. We may, however, note that most, though not all, Nuer totems are in a general way highly regarded by all Nuer, and not only by those who respect them, on account of religious associations of one kind or another which have nothing to do with totemism as such. Thus all Nuer have friendly feelings towards all birds and do not harm them because they are—some more than others—symbols of Spirit and loved by God, though Nuer may also be influenced in this matter [845] by their belief that twins are birds, so that all twins respect all [262] birds. Ernst Marno noted nearly a century ago that Nuer will not eat birds[2] and Mr. Jackson, speaking of this avoidance, remarks

[1] e.g. B. Malinowski, *Science, Religion and Reality*, 1926, pp. 24 and 43 seq.; A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Fourth Pacific Science Congress*, vol. iii, 1929, pp. 295–309. Émile Durkheim protested against such interpretations (*Sociology and Philosophy*, Eng. trans. by D. Pocock, 1954, p. 86).

[2] Ernst Marno, *Reisen im Gebiete des Blauen und Weissen Nil*, 1874, p. 349.

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that 'one explanation put forward for this abstention is that the bird can fly in the skies and is accordingly in communication with the Great Spirit'.[1] The *jakok in rol*, the pied crow, a bird which frequents Nuer homesteads, is especially favoured because it is the bird of the female spirit *buk*, the mother of *deng*. Nuer say that 'everyone respects the pied crow', and one sometimes hears it spoken of as *kuaar*, priest. Nuer can therefore readily entertain the idea of a bird being the totem of a lineage, being, that is, an emblem of Spirit conceived of in relation to a lineage. Also, whilst I would hesitate to say that all Nuer have a high regard for snakes, it can be said that they do not go out of their way to harm them, whether they belong to lineages which respect snakes or not. They leave them in peace unless they are threatened by them or suddenly afraid of them. All Nuer seem to regard them as being in some sense manifestations of Spirit, so that, here again, it appears natural to those who do not respect them that other people should do so. Some of the more important totems are trees. To all intents and purposes, and so far as any question of showing them respect or otherwise is concerned, this means trees of certain species when they grow on village sites, and no Nuer, and not only those who respect them as totems, would injure trees growing near their homesteads. Nuerland is for the most part treeless savannah country, and trees which give shade, such as sycamores and to some extent the tamarind, are rare. Nuer have a feeling that those which give them shade in their sun-baked homes have grown there by a special dispensation of God. Their being there at all is a manifestation of Spirit, and all the more so if, as is sometimes the case, they have grown from saplings or cuttings planted as shrines to spirits. Here again, therefore, people can easily understand that such trees are regarded by some lineages as material manifestations of a special relationship of Spirit to themselves.[2] Rivers and streams also have a general spiritual significance for all Nuer because they are associated with *buk man deang*, which is the spirit of all rivers. It is *kwoth pini*, the spirit of water. Nuer say that '*yier e kwoth neini dial*', 'rivers are the spirit (totem) of everybody'. Again, monorchids are for all a sign of spiritual activity, as is also the birth of a calf with cuany markings.

776 x 825 ● 776 x 824 776 x [823] [824] ms.

[1] H. C. Jackson, op. cit., p. 169.

[2] It may be noted that the Nuer word for tree, *jath* (pl. *jen*), is probably the same word as the generic term for totem in Dinka, *yath* (pl. *yeth*) (P. A. Nebel, *Dinka Grammar*, 1948, p. 170).

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000 sign of spiritual activity, as is also the birth of a calf with *ma cuany* markings.

× 776 We may conclude that Nuer totems tend to be creatures and things which for one or other reason easily evoke the idea of Spirit in any Nuer and are hence suitable symbols for Spirit in relation to lineages; and then the image of the symbol may become through association linked with other images, leading to additional totems. The Gaanwar clan have a special connexion with rain, which is a symbol of Spirit in its special relationship to their [821] clan. The *nyuot*-tree is a secondary symbol which, on account of its peculiar appearance and habits, is associated in the Nuer mind with rain. The waterbuck and several species of fish are further symbols linked to the *nyuot*-tree as secondary totems because, we may presume, they also, in their different ways, are associated with water. An interpretation of the totemic relationship is here, then, not to be sought in the nature of the totem itself but in an association it brings to the mind. Similarly those who respect [825] bees respect them not because they are bees but because their colour resembles to Nuer eyes the python, and it is probably the same with soldier ants and the tree cobra.

As we have seen, in their totemic relationships it is Spirit rather than the totems in which Nuer are interested. In so far as they are interested in the totems themselves it is not in their intrinsic nature but in their character as symbols through which Spirit manifests itself to human intelligence. Consequently, since the totemic attitude is neither derived from, nor primarily directed towards, the things as they are in themselves but the things as representing and manifesting Spirit, Nuer would not be at all surprised at anything being, or becoming, a totem. Anyone may at any time suddenly find himself in a totemistic relationship to some class of objects, and if for one reason or another his descendants trouble to remember and maintain the relationship, then that class becomes the totem of a lineage. Let us consider how Nuer think of totemic relationships coming about.

× 776 I have had frequent occasion to remark that those who respect
177 a totem are Dinka or of Dinka origin, and our discussion of the
613 whole problem of Nuer totemism is complicated, as was our discussion of the spirits of the air, by the fact that Nuer regard their totems as having for the most part come from the Dinka. I have often heard true Nuer say that when you find that a man respects

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×776 761 children now respect this species of snake. Mgr. Mlakic records how a Nuer who has a tree for his totem told him that one of his ancestors had died from being pricked by a thorn of that tree. Anything may thus become a totem. Mgr. Mlakic also recounts how a Nuer refused to accept a milleme coin the Father offered him because a boy of his family, when playing with a milleme, got it into his ear and died. The family now respect millemes.[1]

×776 ● 825 A youth, a friend of mine in western Nuerland, had recently acquired a respect for speckled vultures. The Nuer consider it a misfortune if a speckled vulture, a hooded vulture, a Goliath heron, a maribou stork, or an egret settles on the crown of a byre or dwelling-hut. *'Theke ke, cike de nyur wi tie'*, 'they (the birds) respect them (byres and huts), they ought not to settle on their [782] crowns'. If this happens a goat is sacrificed and the bird is asked why it should settle on a habitation. It is requested to accept the offering and take itself and all badness from the homestead. Nuer say that the bird is *kwoth*, Spirit, but, here again, they do not mean that the bird is in itself Spirit but that it is a form in which Spirit is beholden. Nuer know that the bird is *kwoth* only through its unusual behaviour. The man to whom I have referred went some years ago with a party of men to find a cow which had died in the bush. When they found it, some speckled vultures rose from the carcass and one of them settled on the man's head. This caused great consternation because its settling on the man's head showed the presence of Spirit. As soon as the party reached home a goat [782] was sacrificed and left in the bush for the vultures to eat. From that time the man respected vultures. One day he told me that the night before he had dreamt of this incident and had early that morning visited a female diviner (*tiet*) to find out whether his dream presaged anything bad for him. She assured him that no harm would come to him as the vulture-spirit had been sacrificed to (*ca kir*) in the first place. If it had not been satisfied it would have caused him sickness long ago. All he need now do, she said, was to cut a piece off a goat's ear and tell the vultures that it was his gift to them. This he had at once done. I do not know of any lineages which have the vulture as their totem, but it became a totem for this man by its action of alighting on his head. Since such an event is regarded by Nuer as a manifestation of Spirit, through the happening there came into being for this man a

[1] Op. cit.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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825

vulture-spirit. It must be said, however, that it does not follow that because a thing has caused or presaged a misfortune it will be respected. Thus, to give a single example, I was told that a hippopotamus bit a pregnant woman in the belly. She died, but her child, a male, lived. When I asked whether his descendants respect hippopotamuses I was told 'no, why should they when a hippopotamus killed their grandmother?'. Any number of examples could be cited of persons being killed or injured—by lions, crocodiles, spears, and so on—without a respect relationship being brought about thereby between the cause of the misfortune and the man who suffered it or his descendants. For this to happen it would seem that the event must have extraordinary features. Even then, as the case of the pregnant woman shows, a totemic relationship does not inevitably arise.

However a totemic relationship may be thought to have come about in the first instance, it seems very natural to Nuer that it should typically be a relationship between a lineage and a whole species or class, for they speak of natural species, on analogy with their own social segments, as lineages, so that the relationship between a lineage and a totemic species is for them on the pattern of what they call a *buth* relationship—that is a relationship between collateral lineages with a common ancestor. The animal world is spoken of in terms of the pattern of their social world, in terms of *cieng*, community, and *thok dwiel*, lineage. There is the community of the *jiciengngang*, the growling folk of tooth and claw such as the lion, the leopard, the hyena, the jackal, the wild dog, and the domesticated dog. A lineage of this carnivorous community are the mongooses, which divide into a number of smaller lineages of little animals: the brindled mongooses, the white-tailed mongooses, the serval cats, the civet cats, the genets, &c. Another what the Nuer also call *bab*, collectivity or class or kind, are the graminivorous animals: thiang, white-eared cob, gazelle, buffalo, bushbuck, waterbuck, hare, cow, sheep, goat, &c. The *nyarecjok*, the feetless people, are the lineages of snakes. The big and miscellaneous community of the *jiyier* or *ciengbalangni* are the river people, the people who hate to be away from streams and marshes: crocodiles, monitor lizards, the many kinds of fish, the marsh birds (such as herons, darters, shoe-bills, fish-eagles, snake-birds, the mouse-coloured pelican, and the large lineage of geese, duck, and teal), and the Anuak and Balak Dinka peoples, who for the

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most part are without cattle and are riverain cultivators and fishermen. The birds are of two main classes. The *gaat kwoth*, the children of God, or the *jiciengkwoth*, the people of the community of God, are such birds as the speckled vulture, the hooded vulture, the white pelican, the pied crow, the black crow, the glossy ibis, the sacred ibis, the crested crane, the goshawk, and the dove. The *jiciengnyadiet*, the community of birds, count as *gaat nyiet*, sisters' sons, to the children of God, and are hence of the category of *gaat nya kwoth*, sons of daughter(s) of God. It includes guineafowl, francolin, finches, swallows, weaver-birds, wagtails, bats, &c. Some birds, as we have seen, belong to the river people. Birds of which Nuer think little, such as the guineafowl, the francolin, and some of the marsh birds—the most earth-bound birds—are described by them as being *jaang*, Dinka or of Dinka descent, again on the pattern of their own society. The same idea is expressed by saying that they are *gaat nya dila*, sons of daughter(s) of a person of true or aristocratic descent. *Dil*, in the wide general sense of the word on which the analogy is based, denotes a true Nuer as distinct from someone of Dinka origin, and to say that a lineage are sons of daughters of a *dil* implies that agnatically they are of Dinka origin. The same idea is expressed in a different metaphor by figuring the birds as children of *deng* the air-spirit, for Nuer think of it as a Dinka spirit.

In saying that certain birds are children of God and that others are children of his daughters Nuer are, as I have earlier explained, speaking in poetic metaphors. A bird is not regarded literally as a child of God any more than another bird is regarded literally as a Dinka. The metaphor is, however, somewhat more complex than it appears to be at first sight, because, as we shall see, spirits are represented in a similar genealogical configuration, suggesting a symbolic correspondence between the scale of birds and the scale of spirits which fits in with the positions both occupy in space.

III

After some account has been given of the other spirits of the below we will be better placed to view the conception of Spirit as a whole, and the place of totemism in the entire system of Nuer religious thought will then be more clearly seen. Here, only some conclusions are presented, and in a preliminary way.

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sprite in the manner I have described when speaking of the spirits of the air. He must then give the man from whom he purchased the sprite some cattle to get him to invoke it, asking it to assist the purchaser and not to harm his family, for spirits of this kind are regarded as dangerous for the families of their possessors. They may protect their owners and bring them good fortune, but they are also liable to turn on members of their families and kin if they are not frequently offered gifts. The new owner now hangs the meteorite in a gourd in his hut and hangs also near it offerings of butter, ashes, and tobacco in other gourds.

Similar sprites are the *bieli yier*, river-sprites. They are found, under the name *biel roa*, hippopotamus-sprite, in some hippopotamuses, and also in certain fish, *rec car*, *ludh* (lung-fish), *lek*, and *ril*.[1] Nuer declare that '*cike mat*', 'they have congregated', in certain hippopotamuses. It is said that if a man kills one of these animals he will see a light on its head, and that afterwards the sprite will seize him. He breaks the skull of the animal with an axe and takes out the brains and boils them, rubs a little of the boiled brains on his forehead and right arm, and eats the rest of them. Shortly afterwards he falls sick, and if his surmise that it is the sprite which has made him sick is confirmed by a prophet, or by a possessor of this or another kind of sprite, a hand-clapping and hymn-singing ceremony is held, in the course of which the sick man becomes dissociated and the sprite speaks through his lips, saying what it is and what it wants. A sacrifice is then made and the bones and chyme of the victim are placed near the entrance to the man's hut and a mound of ashes is piled over them, forming a shrine (*yik bila*), into the top of which a branch of the *nyuot*-tree is stuck. The sprite then leaves the man, but he continues to pay it attention from time to time, dedicating an animal to it and making it offerings, and his children may continue to do so after his death. Other *bieli* are the *biel jiath*, tree-sprite, *biel real*, termite mound-sprite, and what is sometimes called *kwoth juaini*, spirit of grasses, which manifests itself in a will-o'-the-wisp coming from rotting swamp vegetation and is perhaps the same as *kwoth doar*, spirit of the bush. Dr. Howell speaks also of a *biel rir*, cobra-sprite, and a *biel loi*, cattle peg-sprite, connected with

[1] For identifications of some of the fish mentioned in this chapter see Sabet Girgis, 'A List of Common Fish of the Upper Nile with their Shilluk, Dinka, and Nuer Names', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1948, pp. 121–5.

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seldom go out of their way to kill them. They do not go out to hunt lions, leopards, and hyenas, unless they molest the flocks and herds, and usually they only pursue those graminivorous animals which come to drink near their camps and seem to offer themselves for slaughter. It is not that it is thought to be wrong to kill them, but that except in time of famine, Nuer are little interested in hunting. They speak of it as a Shilluk and Dinka practice beneath the serious attention of a Nuer who can boast of a herd—as a pursuit, that is, of foreigners or of men without cattle. Even those who deliberately set out to hunt elephants and giraffe do so less to obtain meat than to acquire ivory and hair which can be exchanged for cattle, sheep, and goats. This lack of interest in hunting may be due to the fact that their flocks and herds supply them, through sacrifice, with meat and to the nature of their country which renders hunting difficult, but, whatever the reason, they are not interested, so that any killing of animals outside sacrifice is rare; and we may here say again, as has been said before in a rather different context, that the Nuer mind is turned inwards towards his own society of men and cattle. He is not unobservant of nature but he sees it with a contemplative and not with a predatory eye that seeks to destroy and exploit. He sees wild creatures as something in their own right, and his disposition is to live and let live. His folk-stories reflect this attitude and the feeling that killing, like death, is something which has come about almost by accident and is not in the original nature of things.

A large part of Nuer folk-lore consists of stories about animals.[1] There are stories about ogres; a cycle of adventure stories about how cunning fox tricked hyena; many just-so stories which tell why hyenas limp, why plovers have thin legs, why guinea-fowl crouch, why millepedes are blind, why cows have no upper incisors, and so forth; and stories of yet other sorts. God sometimes figures in these stories as a judge in a way which appeals to the Nuer sense of humour as well as to our own. For example, fish, finding that they were visible to man in the water and hence easily speared, appealed to God who let them be invisible. God sometimes figures

[1] I have not published the folk-stories I collected among the Nuer. Some of those given by Miss Huffman (*Nuer Customs and Folk-Lore*, 1931, pp. 88–104) show Anuak influence. Those recorded by Capt. V. H. Fergusson ('Nuer Beast Tales', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1924) have Nuer themes but may be Atwot, or even Mandari, versions of them, for *rill*, the jackal, and *ijong*, the hawk, are two main figures in them, and these are not Nuer words.

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538 825 in them because the animals are made to act like men after the manner of fables. They are given human speech and feelings, live in villages and camps, and have kinship relations on the pattern of human relations; and as men stand in a certain relationship to God in real life, so the animals are placed in a similar relationship in the make-believe of the stories. Miss Huffman says of these stories that the Nuer 'implicitly believe' in them.[1] This was not my impression. It appeared to me that they realize that their folk-tales are just tales which are true only in the sense that they are, as we say, true to life, a dramatization of real situations and an accurate characterization of human and animal, and indeed also of spiritual, qualities. It does not, therefore, worry them that their folk-stories may not accord with, and may contradict, both evidences of the senses and those of tradition and myth, and also each other.

538 825 773 These stories reflect an attitude of mind about man's relation to other creatures, and I mention them in this place, without, however, laying great stress on their significance, because they tell of an original age of innocence in which all creatures lived in amity in a common camp. Various stories, though separate tales and not related as parts of a coherent structure or dramatic plan, nevertheless taken together give us a picture of man at that time, or rather in that state, for the setting of myth and folk-lore lies outside time. He is entirely simple. He does not suffer from hunger, because what later became his stomach lives a life of its own in the bush where it feeds on small insects. He does not have to labour to live because, according to another story, which contradicts the last one, a single grain of millet soaked in water makes a sufficient meal. In this Nuer Eden there is no desire and mating, for the male and female organs are also not yet part of man and woman but live apart from them and separate from each other. As other, and once again contradictory, stories have it, man does not know how to beget or woman to bear. Man has no knowledge of fire and he does not know the spear. Then all changed. The new order is sometimes presented as arising from a quarrel in the camp started, it would seem, by fox persuading mongoose to throw a club into elephant's face. The animals separated and each went its own way and began to live as they now live and to kill each other. Stomach entered into man and he is now always hungry. Elephant taught

[1] Ibid., p. 88.

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him how to pound millet so that he now satisfies his hunger only by ceaseless labour. The sexual organs attached themselves to man and woman so that they are now constantly desirous of each other. Mouse taught man how to beget and woman how to bear. Dog brought fire to man. And we are told that while fox was plotting to sow dissension among the beasts he gave man the spear and taught him how to use it. It was then that man began to kill, and his first killing seems to have been that of the mother of cow and buffalo, or rather the mother of cattle, for at that time cows and buffaloes were the same. This led to a feud between men and cattle, buffaloes avenging their mother by attacking men in the bush and cows by causing men to quarrel and slay one another.

It may perhaps sharpen our focus on sacrifice to know not only that Nuer seldom kill wild animals but also that they can imagine a state in which man did not kill, that there might have been a beginning to killing as to coitus, to pounding grain, and to other things men do now. Viewed in relation to the dialectic of the stories, the killing of cattle is then seen not to be, as it were, derived from a state of nature in which men kill animals for food, as just one sort of killing among others, but as a product of a new dispensation in which cattle are allotted a sacrificial role and are set apart for this purpose. Other animals may, as a matter more or less of chance, and now and again, be killed, but it is the role and destiny of cattle to be slaughtered in sacrifice. Sacrificial slaughter thus stands at the very centre of the idea of killing, and sacrificial flesh at the very centre of the idea of feasting.

We may conclude, therefore, that the observations we have made earlier concerning the relationship of a man with his favourite ox, the ritual of initiation, &c., must be viewed in the light of the identification of men with cattle in sacrifices. A Nuer does not look upon his cattle as a stockbreeder or dairy farmer does, for in his case his relationship to his beasts is complicated, apart from their use in marriage, by their reservation for sacrifice. And it is not just that he must not kill cattle except in sacrifice because if he were to slaughter them for meat he would lower his resources for food, marriage, and religious purposes. It is not merely a negative injunction. It is not 'thou must not kill' but 'thou must sacrifice'. It is not that they must only kill for sacrifice but that they must sacrifice to kill.

We must not be led astray by this conclusion to suppose that in